SEPSIS

It’s about T.I.M.E.

Rutland Community Collaborative
Sepsis is a life-threatening condition caused by the body’s response to infection, which can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, amputations, and death.

In the United States, in one year, more than 1.7 million people had sepsis. That’s one person every twenty seconds.

Sepsis is the 3rd leading cause of death in the United States after heart disease and cancer, killing more than 270,000 people each year. That’s one person every two minutes.

As many as 87% of sepsis cases start in the community, not in the hospital as is widely believed.

42% of Americans have not heard of sepsis.

The Importance of TIME

Sepsis is a medical emergency and its symptoms must be treated quickly and properly to reduce the risk of death.

The risk of death from sepsis increases by as much as 8% for every hour that treatment is delayed.

As many as 80% of sepsis deaths could be prevented with rapid diagnosis and treatment.

When it comes to sepsis, remember: IT’S ABOUT TIME™. Watch for:

- **TEMPERATURE**: higher or lower than normal
- **INFECTION**: may have signs and symptoms of an infection
- **MENTAL DECLINE**: confused, sleepy, difficult to rouse
- **EXTREMELY ILL**: “I feel like I might die,” severe pain or discomfort

Recognize the importance of TIME by learning more at sepsis.org

If you suspect sepsis, see a doctor, call 9-1-1, or go to the hospital right away and ask “Could it be sepsis?”


(Sources: Sepsis Alliance)
What Is Sepsis?
Sepsis is the body’s extreme response to an infection. This extreme inflammatory response (swelling) in your body is frequently caused by a bacterial or viral infection. Your body’s immune system, which is supposed to fight off the infection, goes into overdrive and begins to attack your body. Without timely treatment, it can rapidly lead to tissue damage, organ failure and death.

Who Is At Risk For Sepsis?
Anyone can get an infection and almost any infection can lead to sepsis. Some people are at a higher risk of infection and sepsis:

- Children younger than one
- Adults 65 and older
- People with a weakened immune system
- People with chronic conditions like diabetes, lung disease, cancer and kidney disease
- People who have had recent surgery or hospitalization, especially within the last 30 days

What Causes Sepsis?
Sepsis is caused by an infection. The infection can be viral, bacterial, fungal, or parasitic. It can be a tiny infection that started in a paper cut or bug bite, or a larger infection, like pneumonia or meningitis. Sometimes, doctors never learn what the infection was.

Prevent Sepsis By:

- Taking antibiotics if prescribed
- Finishing the entire course of antibiotics
- Washing hands frequently
- Asking your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare professional to wash their hands if you have not seen them do so
- Consulting with your doctor about recommended vaccines
- Getting vaccinated for the flu
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle with nutritious food, exercise, and rest
- Seeking medical help if an illness does not seem to be improving or is getting worse
The Symptoms Of Sepsis

There is no single symptom of sepsis. It is rather a combination of symptoms. These symptoms can include any of the following:

- **S**: Shivering, fever or very cold
- **E**: Extreme pain or general discomfort (“worst ever”)
- **P**: Pale or discolored skin
- **S**: Sleepy, difficult to wake, confused
- **I**: “I feel like I might Die”
- **S**: Short of breath

If you have a combination of these symptoms, especially if there is a recent history of a cut, surgery, invasive procedure or infection, see your doctor or medical professional immediately, call 911 or go to the hospital with an advocate and say, “I am concerned about sepsis.”

Is It Contagious?

No, sepsis is not contagious. The infection that triggered sepsis could be contagious. For example, chicken pox can spread between children (and adults), but if someone with chicken pox develops sepsis, this does not mean someone else who has chicken pox will also develop sepsis. This is because sepsis is your body’s reaction to infection, not an infection itself.

How Does Sepsis Occur?

Any type of infection can cause sepsis, from the flu to an infected bug bite. The most common infections that trigger sepsis among older people are pneumonia and urinary tract infections (UTIs). Infections can also happen through abscessed teeth or sores on the skin, either from a simple skin tear because the skin may be dry or fragile, or a pressure sore from sitting in a wheelchair or lying in bed.

It’s not always easy to spot infections among older people. For example, symptoms of a UTI usually include frequent urination, burning or pain while urinating, and cloudy and foul-smelling urine. For many seniors though, the first sign of a UTI is a change in mental status – they become confused or disoriented.
Caring For Infections

Every cut, scrape, or break in the skin can allow bacteria to enter your body that could cause an infection. For this reason, it’s essential that all wounds be cleaned as quickly as possible and be kept clean. They should also be monitored for signs of an infection.

Cleaning Open Wounds:
- Always wash your hands before touching an open wound. If possible, wear clean disposable gloves.
- If the wound is deep, gaping, or has jagged edges and can’t be closed easily, it may need stitches. See your healthcare provider as soon as possible.
- If the wound does not appear to need stitches, rinse it and the surrounding area with clean (not soapy) water. Gently running water over the wound can help remove any dirt or debris that may be inside. If you believe that there is still debris in the wound, this should be checked by a healthcare provider.
- If desired, apply an antibiotic cream or ointment.
- Cover the wound to protect it from dirt if necessary.
- Watch for signs of infection: redness around the wound, skin around the wound warm to touch, increased pain, and/or discharge from the wound. Consult your physician or nurse practitioner if you suspect you may have an infection.

Blisters:
If you have a blister, do not pop it or break it. The blister is a protective barrier and breaking it introduces an opening in your skin. If the blister does break, keep the area clean and monitor for signs of infection.
First Steps In Recovery

After you have had sepsis, rehabilitation usually starts in the hospital by slowly helping you to move around and look after yourself: bathing, sitting up, standing, walking, taking yourself to the restroom, etc. The purpose of rehabilitation is to restore you back to your previous level of health or as close to it as possible.

Begin your rehabilitation by building up your activities slowly, and resting when you are tired. You have been seriously ill, and both your body and mind need time to get better.

Once home, you may continue to experience these symptoms:

- General to extreme weakness and fatigue
- Breathlessness
- General body pains or aches
- Difficulty moving around or sleeping
- Weight loss, lack of appetite, food not tasting normal
- Dry and itchy skin that may peel
- Brittle nails or hair loss

It is also not unusual to feel:

- Unsure of yourself
- Not caring about your appearance
- Wanting to be alone, avoiding friends & family
- Flashbacks, bad memories
- Confusing reality (e.g., not sure what is real and what isn't)
- Feeling anxious, depressed, angry
- Feeling unmotivated
- Having poor concentration
- Frustrated at not being able to do everyday tasks

Be sure your provider is aware of these feelings.
What Can I Do To Help Myself Recover At Home?

- Set small, achievable goals for yourself each week, such as taking a bath, dressing yourself, or walking up the stairs
- Rest and rebuild your strength
- Talk about what you are feeling to family, friends and healthcare provider
- Record your thoughts, struggles, and milestones in a journal
- Learn about sepsis to understand what happened
- Accept help – including home health and skilled rehab therapy
- Ask your family to fill in any gaps you may have in your memory about what happened to you
- Eat a balanced diet
- Exercise if you feel up to it
- Make a list of questions to ask your healthcare provider when you go for a check up
Sepsis Zone Guide

GREEN ZONE ▶ You are doing ok!

- No fever or chills
- No confusion or sleepiness
- No fast heart rate
- No shortness of breath
- No increase in pain
- No discoloration of your skin
- Continue with the medical plan of care
- Keep all your doctor appointments

YELLOW ZONE ▶ Call your doctor!

- You have had a recent infection or surgical procedure and you have a Low grade fever 99.5-100.9°F
- Heart feels like it is beating fast
- You have low energy
- You feel short of breath
- Any wound/surgical incision is warm or red
- Increasing or unexplained pain
- You are supposed to take an antibiotic but cannot afford it or you have stopped taking them before you are supposed to

RED ZONE ▶ Take Action NOW!

- Fever more than 102°F for more than 24 hours
- You can't get warm or you have shaking chills
- Confusion or very sleepy
- Heart is racing
- Breathing fast or short of breath
- Extreme pain
- Pale or discolored skin
- You are not producing much urine

**Call 911 or have someone take you to the emergency department.**
**Tell them you are worried about sepsis.**
# Tracking Your Vital Signs

Use this chart *(or a calendar)* to keep track of your vital signs and mood and see which zone you are in each day.

*Bring this journal to your doctor appointments.*

| Week # __________ | • Heart Rate  
|                  | • Temperature  
|                  | • Zone (green, yellow, red) | Notes: |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Sunday            |                              |       |
| Date __________   | ♥ Rate __________            |       |
|                   | Temperature __________      |       |
|                   | Zone: ■ GREEN   ■ YELLOW ■ RED |       |
| Monday            |                              |       |
| Date __________   | ♥ Rate __________            |       |
|                   | Temperature __________      |       |
|                   | Zone: ■ GREEN   ■ YELLOW ■ RED |       |
| Tuesday           |                              |       |
| Date __________   | ♥ Rate __________            |       |
|                   | Temperature __________      |       |
|                   | Zone: ■ GREEN   ■ YELLOW ■ RED |       |
| Wednesday         |                              |       |
| Date __________   | ♥ Rate __________            |       |
|                   | Temperature __________      |       |
|                   | Zone: ■ GREEN   ■ YELLOW ■ RED |       |
| Thursday          |                              |       |
| Date __________   | ♥ Rate __________            |       |
|                   | Temperature __________      |       |
|                   | Zone: ■ GREEN   ■ YELLOW ■ RED |       |
| Friday            |                              |       |
| Date __________   | ♥ Rate __________            |       |
|                   | Temperature __________      |       |
|                   | Zone: ■ GREEN   ■ YELLOW ■ RED |       |
| Saturday          |                              |       |
| Date __________   | ♥ Rate __________            |       |
|                   | Temperature __________      |       |
|                   | Zone: ■ GREEN   ■ YELLOW ■ RED |       |
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Use this chart *(or a calendar)* to keep track of your vital signs and mood and see which zone you are in each day.

| Week # _______ | • Heart Rate  
• Temperature  
• Zone (green, yellow, red) | Notes: |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------|
| **Sunday**     | ![Heart Rate](#) Rate __________  
Temperature __________  
Zone: [GREEN] [YELLOW] [RED] |        |
| **Monday**     | ![Heart Rate](#) Rate __________  
Temperature __________  
Zone: [GREEN] [YELLOW] [RED] |        |
| **Tuesday**    | ![Heart Rate](#) Rate __________  
Temperature __________  
Zone: [GREEN] [YELLOW] [RED] |        |
| **Wednesday**  | ![Heart Rate](#) Rate __________  
Temperature __________  
Zone: [GREEN] [YELLOW] [RED] |        |
| **Thursday**   | ![Heart Rate](#) Rate __________  
Temperature __________  
Zone: [GREEN] [YELLOW] [RED] |        |
| **Friday**     | ![Heart Rate](#) Rate __________  
Temperature __________  
Zone: [GREEN] [YELLOW] [RED] |        |
| **Saturday**   | ![Heart Rate](#) Rate __________  
Temperature __________  
Zone: [GREEN] [YELLOW] [RED] |        |
Are There Any Long-Term Effects Of Sepsis?

Many people who survive sepsis recover completely and their lives return to normal. However, older people, people who have suffered more severe sepsis and those treated in an intensive care unit are at greatest risk of long-term problems, including suffering from post-sepsis syndrome.

What Is Post-Sepsis Syndrome (PSS)?

Post-sepsis syndrome is the term used to describe the group of long-term problems that some people with severe sepsis experience. These problems may not become apparent for several weeks (post-sepsis), and may include such long-term consequences as:

- Insomnia, difficulty getting to or staying asleep
- Nightmares, vivid hallucinations, panic attacks
- Disabling muscle and joint pains
- Decreased mental (cognitive) functioning
- Loss of self-esteem and self-belief
- Organ dysfunction (kidney failure, respiratory problems, etc.)
- Amputations

Make sure to discuss with your healthcare provider if you have any of these symptoms. There are counselors and therapists who specialize in these issues. If you can arrange to see one, this could be a good first step to recovery.

If you should have thoughts of suicide, please call the Crisis Line at 802-775-1000
Rutland Community Collaborative

Bayada
Center for Health & Learning
Community Health
BioScrip
Drs. Peter and Lisa Hogenkamp
Homeless Prevention Center
Loretto Home & St. Joseph Kervick Residence
Marble Valley Health Works
Mountain View Genesis
OneCare Vermont
The Pines at Rutland Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation
Regional Ambulance Service
Rutland Healthcare & Rehabilitation Center
Rutland Mental Health Services
Rutland Regional Medical Center
SASH (Support and Services at Home)
Southern Vermont Council on Aging
Vermont Chronic Care Initiative
Vermont Department of Health
VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region

REFERENCES

https://healthcarefornewengland.org

www.sepsis.org

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